

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ENERGY REPORTING

Adopted by the Society of Energy Editors (SEE)

Commitment to Zero Tolerance for Copy-Paste Journalism

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Society of Energy Editors (SEE), recognize that the Nigerian energy industry faces headwinds which are universal in nature but local in impact. The complex interplay of International Oil Company (IOC) divestment, energy transition pressures, domestic refining upheavals, subsidy removal, and grid instability demands a level of journalistic rigour that complements the interests of Nigerians.

As the Fourth Estate of the Realm, we acknowledge our duty to inform the public and shape policy discourse. We reject the shortcuts of "copy and paste" journalism and the uncritical use of Artificial Intelligence. We commit to setting the national agenda through deep investigation, accurate data, and balanced narratives. To this end, we adopt this Code of Conduct as the minimum standard for members.

SECTION 1: ACCURACY, VERIFICATION, AND DATA INTEGRITY

1.1. Verification Before Publication

Members must verify facts, figures, and claims regarding production figures and quotas, crude pricing, and reserves, petroleum products availability and pricing.

1.2. Corporate Communications Executives who are members of the SEE (*please see the SEE qualifications criteria for details*) must commit to responding to media inquiries in clear and timely manner even when they do not have an official position.

Specific Provision: No data on oil production or subsidy payments shall be published unless cross-referenced with at least two primary sources (e.g., NUPRC, NNPC, NMDPRA or verified industry operators).

Zero Tolerance: While we understand that a journalist may need to credit information to anonymous sources, attribution to industry sources should be verifiable.

1.3. The Primacy of Primary Sources

Journalists shall prioritize original documents (PSCs, MoUs, regulatory filings) over secondary information. The nature of the story will determine the primacy of the source.

When reporting on legacy oil spills, journalists must independently verify environmental impact assessments rather than relying solely on company statements.

SECTION 2: DEFINING AGENDA-SETTING (BEYOND BREAKING NEWS)

2.1. Contextual Reporting

Reporting must go beyond the "headline" to explain the "*why*" and "*what next*." For instance, a report on the collapse of the national grid must include analysis of transmission infrastructure deficits, gas supply bottlenecks, and liquidity issues affecting GenCos.

2.2. In-Depth Investigation

Members shall dedicate resources to investigating the "dark spaces" of the industry, including the financing of artisanal refining, the economic realities of subsidy removal on the most vulnerable, and the security architecture surrounding pipelines.

2.3. Balancing National Interest and Investment Climate

Reporting must balance the imperative of holding the government accountable with the need to portray a factual picture of the investment climate, ensuring that criticism is constructive and does not deliberately undermine national economic security.

SECTION 3: ZERO TOLERANCE FOR PLAGIARISM & COPY-PASTE JOURNALISM

3.1. Strict Prohibition

Zero Tolerance: No member shall copy and paste text, data visualizations, or analysis from another media outlet, wire service, or AI generative tool into a byline story without original rewriting, verification, and proper attribution.

Attribution Rule: Where a story is based on a single press release, the resulting article must add independent value—expert commentary, historical context, or financial analysis—to warrant publication.

3.2. The "Paraphrase Test"

A member must substantially rephrase and improve upon source material. Simply changing the order of words in a corporate press release constitutes a violation of this code.

3.3. AI Safeguards

While AI may be used for research or transcription, the *substance, analysis, and narrative* of the story must be the product of human intellect.

Note: The use of AI to generate large sections of reporting is considered a breach of professional integrity and a violation of this Code.

SECTION 4: AVOIDING CONFLICT OF INTEREST & FINANCIAL BIAS

4.1. Political/Economic Neutrality

Given the polarized debate around refineries and IOCs, reporting must be fair. Critique of policy is allowed, but attacks on specific corporate entities based on unverified rival claims are prohibited.

4.2. Financial Disclosure

While members can accept support for capacity building, travel, or accommodation from oil companies, regulators, or subsidy beneficiaries, they must not allow same to affect objectivity of their report.

Reporting Standard: When reporting on subsidy removal, journalists must clearly distinguish between fiscal policy advocacy, political rhetoric, and economic reality.

SECTION 5: CLIMATE, ENERGY TRANSITION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

5.1. Scientific Literacy

Journalists covering climate change, renewable energy and the entire value-chain of the energy industry must objectively represent scientific data, avoiding alarmism or the dismissal of scientific consensus.

Reports on divestment must analyze dual drivers: climate policy (ESG) in the Global North and the security/financial realities in areas of operation.

5.2. Environmental Justice

Reports on oil spills must give voice to all stakeholders including operators and impacted host communities, ensuring their narratives are reported with dignity and factual accuracy, while balancing the right of reply for operating companies.

SECTION 6: LANGUAGE, TONE, AND NATIONAL SECURITY

6.1. Technical Accuracy

Avoid using simplified or erroneous industry jargon. Terms like "Crude Oil," "Liquefied Natural Gas," "Gas Flaring," and "Petrol Subsidy" must be used correctly and consistently.

6.2. National Security Concerns

While reporting on pipeline vandalism and artisanal refining, members must avoid publishing details that could compromise ongoing military or security operations. Sensationalism that could incite regional tension is strictly prohibited.

SECTION 7: CORRECTIONS AND TRANSPARENCY

7.1. Duty to Correct

Upon discovering a factual error—particularly regarding figures (e.g., misquoting the price of crude or subsidy costs)—the member must issue a prompt correction, without attempting to "bury" the correction on the last page.

7.2. Transparency on Sources

Where a story is based on a leak or anonymous briefing, the member must provide context on the credibility of the source without revealing their identity.

SECTION 8: ENFORCEMENT AND SANCTIONS

8.1. The SEE Ethics Committee

An independent committee shall be established to investigate complaints regarding breaches of this Code of Conduct.

8.2. Penalties for Breach

First Offense (Plagiarism/Copy-Paste): Written warning and public retraction.

Second Offense: Suspension of membership from the Society of Energy Editors.

Third offense: Expulsion

CONCLUSION

We, the members of the Society of Energy Editors (SEE), commit to these standards as a testament to our role in Nigeria's energy future. The challenges of divestment, subsidy removal, and energy security require a media that is brave and bold, intelligent, and—above all—honest. We will not be passive conduits for corporate spin or government propaganda.

We choose the hard path: original reporting, rigorous verification, and fearless agenda-setting.

Adopted this 2nd day of September 2026.